

21 Feb 1957

To: [

From [

This comes from ABCASSOWARY 2. The identity of the Spanish Professor is not known.

I'll try to get it from ABCASS 2, but do_n't know how successful I'll be.

May be worth noting, however, when you get to Madrid.

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A Spanish returnee's comments on Ukraine

The Soviet steamer "Krym" has called on Spanish Mediterranean ports three times during the last four months. Her passengers landing in Spain were none other than native Spaniards, most of them, however, hardly remember the land of their birth. Those returnees from the USSR are mostly young people taken from Spain when they were children during the civil war of 1936-38. Among those arriving are more than one hundred children born in the Soviet Union and a number of non-Spanish wives, mostly Russian women. Husbands of Spanish women, being Soviet citizens, were not permitted to leave the USSR.

The Spanish returnees have spent nearly twenty years in the Soviet Union. There they went to school, found work, took out Soviet citizenship and frequently mixed with the local population through marriage and family ties. About two years ago, however, the Soviet Government gave in to repeated demands of those Spaniards, restored them to their former Spanish citizenship and agreed to let them return home. This was one of the gestures of the collective leadership designed to prove to the world the alleged good faith of its new policy. It is possible that Moscow had other designs in this connection, too.

Among the repatriated Spaniards arriving with the first transport on September 28, 1956 there were several who had spent various lengths of time in Ukraine during different periods.

On a recent trip to Spain the interviewer in this instance arranged through local Ukrainians a meeting with a Spanish returnee who had lived for some time in Ukraine and whom the interviewer calls Juan. When he was 10 years old, Juan was evacuated from the front zone in northern Spain and taken to the Soviet Union. There he finished secondary school and subsequently graduated from a university. He lived in several republics of the USSR and had personal friends among Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians and Turkmen.

A question and answer interview follows.

Q. Where and when did you live in Ukraine?

A. I lived in Ukraine permanently between 1950 and 1955. I studied in a Ukrainian university and then worked in several cities in the eastern part of Ukraine. In addi-

tion, I spent a week or two in each of the other major Ukrainian cities.

Q. Did you, as a foreigner, notice a difference between Ukrainian and Russians in their customs, mentality or behavior?

A. In spite of the strong process of standardization, the Ukrainian people have preserved their independent culture. The Russian language predominates in the cities. I studied at a Ukrainian university, but I did not have to learn Ukrainian. The countryside, however, has an exclusively Ukrainian character. Going from Russia to Ukraine the difference is apparent even from the window of a train. In Ukraine the houses are painted white, surrounded by gardens and orchards, and bathed in flowers. You don't see a thing like that in Russia. Personally I was most impressed by Ukrainian songs and I know many. They reflect the whole world outlook of the Ukrainian people. Russian songs are tedious and tragic, Ukrainian songs are not only very lyrical and spiritual, but also more relaxed. We discussed this subject among friends and concluded that by its passion for song Ukraine resembled Italy.

(Note: Juan speaks Russian very fluently, better than Spanish. He also understands Ukrainian and can make himself understood when necessary. His favorite song was "Dyvlusia na nebo" (Looking at the Sky) which he kept singing when we walked through a Spanish city under the starry Spanish sky. "I often walked like this with Ukrainian student, sometimes a little drunk, singing this song with them. It's a favorite of Ukrainian students. I'm surprised that the Bolsheviks did not prohibit it, as it has not only romance, but also mysticism" - said Juan).

Q. What was the background of your Ukrainian friends and acquaintances? Were they mostly from the intelligentsia, working or peasant class?

A. I am most familiar with the Ukrainian intelligentsia, but I also had good contacts with workers.

Q. Were there any changes in the USSR during recent years?

A. The changes were only superficial and in minor details. The internal core of the Soviet system remains the same: dictatorship and stoolpigeons....When the ostensible liberal course was announced, some party members began to criticize the govern -

Lenin's policy and for this they were expelled from the party. One Professor in Moscow made a proposition that Soviets (councils) take over the government which would mean removal of the communist party from power - he was discharged from the Academy of Science and university; this was a big affair in Moscow.

Q. What is the present situation in Ukraine?

A. Ukraine is being oppressed harder than other republics. The Ukrainian SSR is merely a show-window without any practical meaning. I attended the celebrations of the 300th anniversary of the so-called "union of Ukraine with Russia." Why did they mark this anniversary with so much noise? Because the Russians are worried about gaining the favor of Ukrainians. Ukraine might someday wish to secede.

Q. How did Ukrainian react to this celebration and what is their attitude to Moscow's attempts in this respect?

A. There is a small group which collaborates with Russia in this respect. They are those who are in power. Most often they are ~~opportunists~~ the "shkury" (self-seekers). (Juan explained here that the term "shkury" is applied in the USSR to spineless opportunists who collaborate with the regime purely for personal gain). But a majority of Ukrainians has an ironic smile for all this. I often heard Ukrainians say: "Now we have grown up somewhat and are even with big brother. Any day now and we shall be equals."

Q. What do you think of the nationality problem in the USSR?

A. I believe that this is the weakest spot of the Soviet empire. The non-Russian nations will bring about its downfall. When I was in a hospital as a patient I met a high-ranking officer of the MVD. He let himself go believing that I was one of their men. He said: "Look at those Turkmen, they are only waiting for war and an opportunity to rise against us and separate from us. But they will never live to see it: we'll sooner destroy them all." Ukrainians and Georgians have the reputation of the worst kind of "bourgeois nationalists" in the entire USSR. Ideological propaganda in Ukraine always accentuates the need to fight Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism. Ethnic Russians dislike Ukrainians, they don't like the fact that Ukrainians exist and have

their own Ukrainian language and culture separate from the Russian. Ukrainians are still derisively called "Khakhly" and whenever Ukrainians are mentioned one feels a hostility toward them. But agree with their existence they must. The Bolsheviks use Ukrainian writers like Shevchenko, Franko and Lesya Ukrainka to combat Ukrainian nationalism trying to prove that they were also opposed to it. The Bolsheviks force Ukrainians to write books and articles against Ukrainian nationalism. I knew several such writers, but I am certain that within their hearts they were nationalists.

Q. Do you believe in the existence of a nationalism among Ukrainians, i.e. a national consciousness and desire for national independence?

A. I have not the slightest doubt about it. Some express this desire clearly, some less clearly. A majority is groping for a way to that independent statehood.

The strongest national, i.e. nationalist movement existed in Western Ukraine after the war. Even as late as 1954 many graduates of Leningrad and Moscow University refused to take jobs in Lviv and other West Ukrainian cities. I knew many of them personally. "Why should I go there - they would say - if you are made to feel at every step that the people don't like us." Earlier people were afraid to go there because there was shooting. I knew a man who went for a cure in a sanatorium in the Carpathian Mountains. He did not complete his cure, he had to run away from that place because the "banderivtsi" used to be nightly visitors.

Q. I see that you are familiar with the term "banderivtsi."

A. Why not? The whole USSR was familiar with "banderist bands."

Q. Did the people believe that they were "bands?"

A. The people stopped believing in "bands" long ago. Everyone was surprised that the fight between Ukrainian nationalists and the Soviet Government in Western Ukraine lasted so long. Announcements were made all the time that an area was cleared, but news of battles, attacks and assassinations kept coming. Legends about the heroism of "banderivtsi" spread all over the Soviet Union. Many people were happy that a group appeared which was beating the communists and that the Bolsheviks

are helpless against them.

Q. Do you think that this national liberation movement in West Ukraine during the post-war period influenced the people of other parts of Ukraine and of the USSR?

A. Of course. This fight raised the people's spirits and added courage to more active opposition to the regime. The people admired the heroism of those partisans who had the courage to resist such a ruthless machine of terror like Bolshevism.

Q. Are you going to publish your experiences in the USSR in newspapers or in a book?

A. I want to write a book about conditions in the USSR with a separate chapter on Ukraine.

During the course of this conversation Juan also told about his friend, also a Spanish returnee who met several Ukrainians, repatriates from Argentina. They all complained bitterly that they had been fooled. They have to work just like other Soviet citizens and live under the same conditions, a whole family in one room. One of them had his own butcher-shop in Argentina and sighed about his good life there compared to his present misery. "Why did you leave, then? - asked the Spaniard.- "They promised us great riches, prosperity, freedom and that's why we left Argentina," our poor countryman complained. "My Spanish friend answered with spite: "Now you don't have to be afraid of ever leaving the Soviet Union!"- Juan commented.

According to Juan there were many more Spaniards now back in Spain who had lived in Ukraine for many years, but it is now difficult to locate them.

Our Spanish friend Juan lived in Kiev, studied there and later worked as lecturer of Marxism-Leninism in Kiev University. He asked that these personal data about him be kept confidential, otherwise the Bolsheviks could easily guess his identity, who he associated with and with whom he talked most. This way they would find out who were his informants about Ukrainian sentiments and desires. Juan was the only Spaniard in Kiev University.

In a conversation in the presence of the director of the Spanish Radio he declared: "Every Ukrainian carries one thought deep in his soul - Ukrainian independence from Moscow." Many members of the communist party are primarily Ukrainians and only in the second place communists. As a foreigner he was trusted and Ukrainians told him or hinted at their desires.

When asked (in a subsequent talk) about the influence of resistance of the nationalist underground of Western Ukraine on the people of Kiev and East Ukraine, he answered: "Obviously, the Ukrainian could neither tell me outright nor admit they were sympathizing with that movement. But when conversation turned to battles of Ukrainian nationalists with the MVD, assassination of communists, etc. one could feel a 'rejoicing' in the voices of the Ukrainians, as though they wanted to say 'our patriots are giving the communists a good beating.'

Information

from letters of Dr. Bohdan Cymbalista, Madrid, Dec. 6, and Dec. 23, 1956.

(Dec. 6,): ...Russian broadcasts (from Radio Nacional) were directed by old Russian emigres with monarchist leanings. Some of them are Spanish citizens and took part in the civil war on the side of General Franco. They are all defenders of Russia's "unity and indivisibility" and avowed enemies of Ukraine. So far two of them have been removed who had been most hostile to Ukrainian broadcasts: Muksky, chief editor of broadcasts and Gursky, an officer of the Spanish Army and censor, subsequently co-editor of Russian broadcasts. Only one remains, Yaremchuk from Volhynia. He is a typical renegade who stated in one of his broadcasts that "the traitor Hrushevsky escaped to Galicia, there invented the Ukrainian language which nobody speaks in Ukraine, nor understands..."

The writer of the letter reports that several days earlier, he met a Spaniard who recently returned from the Soviet Union. This man studied in Moscow and Kiev and had many Ukrainian friends. He can sing Ukrainian songs and speaks a little Ukrainian. His Russian is perfect. He had been taken to the USSR when 10 years old. He will work on Russian broadcasts. He reports that being a foreigner he was trusted by Ukrainians. According to him "In every Ukrainian's soul lies the idea of independence." Many Russians did not want to go to work in Lviv being afraid that there they would encounter "banderivtsi." There is talk about "banderivtsi" all over the USSR.

An American, Mr. Henshel Peak recently left for a holiday at home. He comes from California and works in the chief editor's office of the Spanish "Radio Nacional." He has been delegated to the job in Spain by an American organization "Christianform" (the author considers him a personal friend and a very pleasant person). He gave Mr. Peak the address of Prof. Dobriansky to look up in Washington.